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THE WITNESS OF GOD

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FAITH

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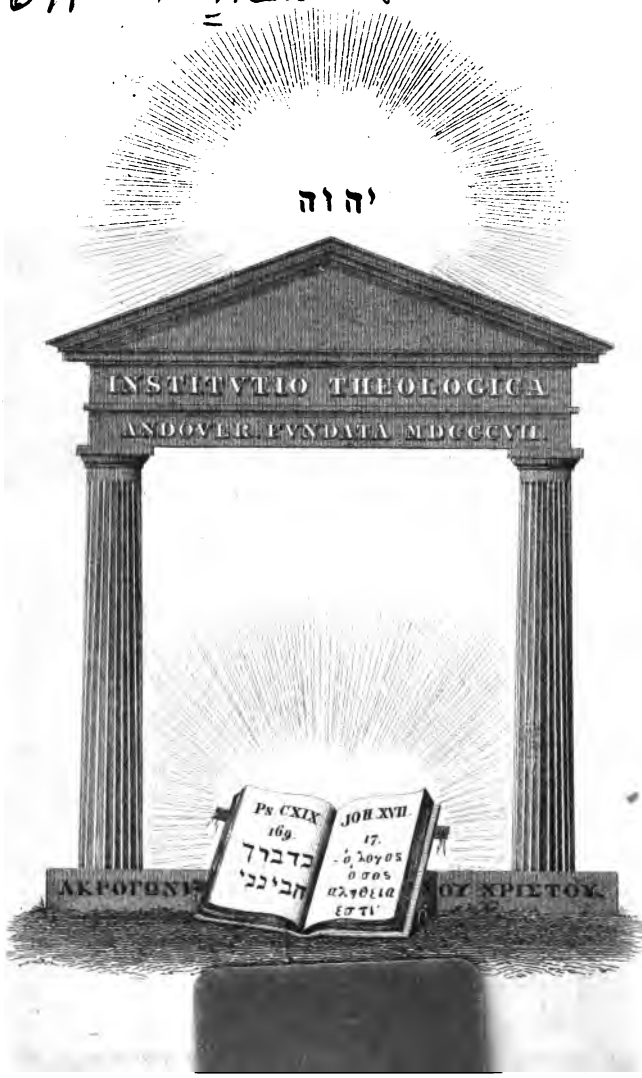
T. H. GREEN

691 Green 1886



THE WITNESS OF GOD

AND

FAITH

TWO LAY SERMONS

BY THE LATE

T. H. GREEN, M.A., LL.D.

FELLOW OF BALLIOL COLLEGE AND WHYTE'S PROFESSOR OF MORAL PHILOSOPHY IN THE UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD

EDITED WITH AN INTRODUCTORY NOTICE

BY THE LATE

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PREFACE.

THE two Sermons composing this volume, though previously printed for private circulation, are now published for the first time. They were delivered in a college lecture-room to undergraduate members of Balliol College, Oxford. The first sermon was read at the beginning of 1870, shortly after Mr. Green had been made a tutor of the College. He was the first layman who had filled the office of tutor, and he had to consider whether he would follow a custom maintained by former clerical tutors, of speaking on a religious subject to their pupils on the evening before the administration of Holy Communion.

After some hesitation he resolved to use the opportunity to meet some of the religious difficulties which haunt the minds of men who are beginning the study of philosophy and the laws of historical evidence. He met these difficulties not merely by the statement of a metaphysical position, but by enforcing, with all the impressive energy of a non-sacerdotal teacher, the practical character of the Christian life. The reader of these sermons, perplexed, perhaps, by abstract argument, may not at once detect the buried life of spiritual passion which burns beneath, but those who heard the first sermon have never forgotten the power with which the speaker dealt in a few words with the common theme of sin and vice.

Though not present when the first sermon was delivered, I well remember the delivery of the second ; the prayer which preceded it, and the stillness with which, for not far short of two hours, we listened to a discourse

which, even in its most metaphysical passages, seemed to summon us to a new spiritual life. The second sermon was written in 1878, not for Mr. Green's pupils alone, but for the senior members of the whole College. At this time, though taking a less active part in the tuition of the College, he was still deeply interested in meeting the religious wants which he had tried to satisfy eight years before. The use of Biblical phrases in his first sermon he found had caused some perplexity; and though the intellectual position of the two sermons is the same, in the second he purposely discards Scriptural language. Much as he reverenced the Bible, of which he once characteristically said it was the only book he really knew well, he was determined that his devotion to it should never, even in appearance, overpower his intellectual conscience.

Like more than one famous book of the present epoch, these sermons have for their

aim the separation of the spiritual from the supernatural. Mr. Green sought to establish in them an intellectual position for the Christian faith which should not be called in question by every advance in historical evidence and in physical science. It is with no eagerness to impair the existing religious creeds that he insists on the incorrectness of the theories on which they are professedly based; other thinkers have assailed the orthodox foundations of religion to overthrow it, Mr. Green assailed them to save it.

[NOTE.—Mr. Green in his last illness left the two sermons which are here printed in the hands of Mr. Arnold Toynbee, his friend and former pupil, to be dealt with at his discretion. Within a year Mr. Toynbee has also been taken away. It had been his intention to publish the sermons with an Introduction, elucidating such parts of them as might be difficult to readers unaccustomed to metaphysical thought and language. This Introduction he was never able to complete, but at

the beginning of his illness he expressed the wish that the publication of the sermons should not be delayed, and that as few words as possible of his own should be prefixed to them. The above Preface is an extract from what he had written.—C. M. T.]

THE WITNESS OF GOD.

1 COR. v. 7, 8.

Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us: therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness; but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.
(Read also the previous part of the Epistle.)

IN the chapter from which this text is taken, St. Paul has been speaking — hurriedly, as of a thing not to be dwelt upon —of a case of incest which had occurred among the Corinthian Christians. Earlier in the Epistle he had rebuked them more at large for the contentions among them, for the Judaic or anti-Judaic partisanship which, here as elsewhere (Gal. v. 20), he traces to the same root of carnality as what are commonly called sins of the flesh. 'Whereas there is among you envying and strife and divisions,

are ye not carnal and walk as men?' All the while, it seems, they were boasting of their privilege as 'spiritual,' as 'free,' as 'wise in Christ.' St. Paul fully admits their privilege. Ideally they were the temple of God, and the Spirit of God dwelt in them, communicating a wisdom which the natural or carnal man could not receive. They had the mind of Christ, in virtue of which they might search all things, even the deep things of God. In the risen Lord, whose was the earth and the fulness thereof, all things were lawful unto them. All things were theirs, whether the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come. Yet the very assertion of the privilege, as the Corinthians asserted it, belied it. They made it a ground of conceit, of selfishness, even of sensual licence, and in so doing showed that it was not actually theirs. In the exaltation of their new deliverance they were losing the moral result which gave that deliverance its specific value.

The essential opposition, according to St. Paul's conception, between the wisdom of God which he preached and the religions

which it was to supersede, lay in its character as at once a gift and a universal gift. It was thus opposed alike to the Gentile and Jewish religions, and to the wisdom of the world. The Gentile religions were inventions of men, 'changing the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds and four-footed beasts and creeping things.' In the nature of the case they were exclusive. They rested on fictitious systems of priesthood or caste or local worship, limited by time and place, by national superiority, even by the forces of nature. Those who lived under them were not yet properly moralised. They had not realised their spiritual community; or, in Pauline phraseology, they were in 'bondage under the elements of the world.' Nor had the Jews escaped this bondage. They had lived under a system which was indeed, in one sense, the gift of God, as having a special pædagogic purpose in His counsels. The Law was properly a schoolmaster to bring them to Christ; but in so far as its temporary disciplinary character was lost sight of—so far

as it was made a ground of national exclusiveness, and its observance a matter of personal pride—it cut its votaries off from the righteousness of God, which is essentially a derived, communicated, and universal righteousness; not of works, but of grace; not for a peculiar people, but for all men. They were living, not in the freedom and self-abandonment of the Spirit, but in the exclusiveness and selfishness of the flesh. Nay, as observing days and months and times and years, they were like the heathen nature-worshippers, under the elements of the world. Their religion was not properly a moral one, but still determined by nature and sense.

The 'wisdom of the world' was weighted by a like burden of the flesh. Its fault did not lie in its aspiration, or in any inherent impotence of man to know the things of God. On the contrary, 'that which might be known of God'—His intelligible nature—'was manifest in man' (Rom. i. 19), if man would but open his eyes to see it: and the effort to know Him fully in whom were hid the treasures of wisdom and knowledge, as St. Paul

tells us of himself, was the labour of his life. (Phil. iii. 10; Col. ii. 3.) But the aspiration after knowledge and God is one thing, the aspiration of self-conceit another; and, in the eyes of St. Paul, the intellectual movement of the Gentile world had been of the latter sort. As the Jew, going about to establish his own righteousness, had not attained unto the righteousness of God, so the Greek, seeking for a wisdom which should be his own discovery, not a revelation of God's Spirit (1 Cor. ii. 10), had lost at every step what he seemed to be finding. The wisdom which he gained was in word, not in power. It had no power over his will. It helped him not to attain to the new life, to the emancipation from sense, to the resurrection of the dead. On his heart, in the study of his poets and philosophers, as upon the Jew's in the reading of Moses, the veil remained—the veil of self-regard and sensuous judgment. Poring on himself, and looking askance at his fellow, his face was not open to the glory of the Lord, and hence was not changed into its image. When that glory was manifested in a body of humiliation,

in the baseness of the cross, blinded by the shows of flesh, he could not recognise it. It was foolishness to him. If the princes of this world crucified the Lord of Glory, its wisdom —or, as we should say, its enlightenment and cultivation—had been no wiser. It had taken sides with the princes, and thought scorn of the Crucified. Till its own flesh had been crucified—till it had ceased to be a wisdom of the world, *i.e.* a self-seeking wisdom, and become a wisdom of God, it could do no other.

To this vain wisdom of the world, as represented by Greek enlightenment; to its self-righteousness, as represented by the zealous for the Law; to its sensual religiosity, as represented by the impure worships described in the first chapter of the Epistle to the Romans, St. Paul opposes the wisdom, righteousness, and sanctification which Christ 'is made unto us of God.' Can we penetrate behind the cloak of theological artifice with which this language has been overlaid, to a meaning true, permanently, and for us?

Christ is to St. Paul, essentially, if not

solely, the crucified and risen One. Whatever he knew of the life of Jesus of Nazareth —and there is no reason to think that he knew anything of its details—was, at any rate, absorbed and lost in his contemplation of the finishing act by which it became purely spiritual and heavenly—of that death unto sin in virtue of which Christ lived eternally unto God. The death and rising again of the Christ, as he conceived them, were not separate and independent events. They were two sides of the same act—an act which, relatively to sin, to the flesh, to the old man, to all which separates from God, is death; but which, just for that reason, is the birth of a new life relatively to God. This act, again, though St. Paul doubtless identified it upon its several sides with the crucifixion of Jesus upon Mount Calvary, and His resurrection on the third day, was not to him an historical event, in the past now as beforehand it had been in the future. Though they are not St. Paul's own words, yet it is quite in his spirit to say that Christ was slain from the foundation of the world. Christ was that

Second Man, who is the Lord from Heaven. He was God's power and God's wisdom. God was in Him, so that what He did, God did. A death unto life, a life out of death, must, then, be in some way the essence of the divine nature—must be an act which, though exhibited once for all in the crucifixion and resurrection of Christ, was yet eternal—the act of God Himself. For that very reason, however, it was one perpetually re-enacted, and to be re-enacted, by man. If Christ died for all, all died in Him: all were buried in His grave to be all made alive in His resurrection. It is so far as the Second Man, which is from Heaven, and whose act is God's, thus lives and dies in us, that He becomes to us a wisdom of God, which is righteousness, sanctification, and redemption. In other words, He constitutes in us a new intellectual consciousness, which transforms the will, and is the source of a new moral life. In considering how this is, we shall find the practical realisation—and with it the explanation and necessity—of that conception of the resurrection as eternally wrought by God,

which might otherwise seem abstract or mystical.

The wisdom of the world comes to nought, because it puts its own pretension between itself and God. It will not die that it may live. It will not renounce the sensual view of things and cancel the conceit which grows from this view, that it may open itself to the true knowledge, which can only be received as a revelation of God. This wisdom represents the mental state of what St. Paul calls the carnal or natural man. It is overcome by the exhibition in Christ of that other mental state, in which self is renounced that God may be known. This is the mind of the Spirit. If it were a condition, however, which the individual could attain by his own effort, it would merely be the glorification of the wisdom of the world. It would be a self-renunciation which would be the acme of self-seeking. On the other hand, presented as the continuous act of God Himself, as the eternal self-surrender of the Divine Son to the Father, it is for us and may be in us, but is not of us. Nay, it is just because not of us,

that it may be in us. Because it is the mind of Christ, and Christ is God's, in the contemplation of it we are taken out of ourselves; we slip the natural man and appropriate that mind which we behold. Constrained by God's manifested love, we cease to be our own, that Christ may become ours. We are conformed to the image of the Son, we receive the spirit of adoption, we have the wisdom of God.

Thus that which Stoicism could not do, 'in that it was weak through the flesh,' is achieved in Christ. The true wisdom which comes with self-abandonment is attained without neutralisation by personal pride developed in the process of attainment. To him who thus gains it, it means a change of ideas, a new view of the world, which gradually refashions his life. 'Old things are passed away, behold all things are become new.' Even upon the natural world he looks with altered eyes. It is no longer to him a field for complacent curiosity to roam in, but the first stage of God's revelation of Himself. He finds the whole creation groaning and travailing after God; dying because it cannot con-

tain Him, yet waiting for, and leading up to His manifestation. (Rom. viii. 19, 22.) Much more in the conception of the moral life, as the process in which Christ's death unto the flesh that he might live unto God is evermore repeated, has he a new key to unlock its secrets. Thus receiving Christ as his wisdom, and in the new consciousness thus constituted, he is redeemed from the bondage of sin, redeemed from the curse of the Law, because he is redeemed from himself. The bondage of sin is that which no discipline, no reformation of the habits, no observance of the Law can break. The observance of the Law carries its own curse, which is this, that the very act of its fulfilment breeds a new selfishness, and with it a new sin. From this curse there is no redemption but in the substitution of Christ, the New Man from heaven, for the old. Our mind must become Christ's, as Christ is God's. Our very self-consciousness, crucified with Him, must cease to be our own. Only then can our works, as being of God that worketh in us, work out the true salvation, the deliverance from the self-seeking self. Thus we

gain a righteousness which is not after the Law, even the righteousness of God; which, because it is of God, unlike the self-elaborated righteousness of the Jew, instead of exalting men in conceit against each other, blends all in a common society of the redeemed. Thus finally we are sanctified. Bearing each other's burdens, as brethren in the Lord, we fulfil the Law. The blood of sprinkling is upon us, the crucified and risen Christ is in us. The self-abandoning self-consciousness, which knows itself as of God, 'flows through our deeds and makes them pure.'

In the above I have tried to reproduce with as much exactness as modern phraseology admits of, and without any conventional use of theological language, the essence of St. Paul's belief in Christ. So soon as we are brought face to face with it, the question inevitably suggests itself—Is not this conception of an eternal act of death into life, manifested in Christ and to be shared in by us, a mere piece of doubtful metaphysics, so hard to be understood that Christendom, since St. Paul's time, has been busy in ex-

plaining it away, reducing the eternal act into a merely historical one, and the substitution of the new man for the old within us to a forensic substitution without us of Christ's merits for our sins, of the penalty which He bore for that due to us? If the conception has some metaphysical truth, what is its relation to life? In what does the man who has it, and with it (according to our interpretation of St. Paul) the wisdom of God, differ practically from the man to whom it is unmeaning? Do we not in making righteousness and sanctification issue out of such a conception, reduce these themselves to mere ideas or empty phrases?

To this I answer, that all moral action begins from ideas. If it did not, the effort to persuade men should cease to-morrow. To say then that Christ, as the wisdom of God, is an idea, or form of intellectual consciousness—and what else can St. Paul mean when he says that Christ is the Spirit, which God gives us (1 Cor. ii. 10; 2 Cor. iii. 17, 18)?—is the very reverse of reducing Him to an impotent abstraction. An idea may indeed, to

use St. Paul's phrase, be in word, but it may also be in power. It is in word only, if we regard it as our own invention and glory in it as such; it is in power, if it is the communication of God, and as such received by us. Now this consciousness, of which the presence in us is the presence of Christ—this perpetual withdrawal from sense and self-regard into God—just because it is the presence of Christ, is the communication of God. It does not thus cease to be intellectual, a mode of thought, an idea. St. Paul constantly speaks of it in terms appropriate to the intellect, such as 'wisdom' and 'knowledge.' But it is a mode of thought which is from eternity, which is of God, not of us, of which we may partake but which we do not originate. Therefore it is 'in power.' It is metaphysical, if you like; or, as St. Paul puts it, it is of faith. It has no representative in the world we see, as we see it. No life that we can live is a full expression of it. St. Paul himself, having already in some sort the mind of Christ, yet counted not himself to have attained it. To know Christ and the power

of His resurrection was still a goal towards which he had to struggle. (Phil. iii. 10, &c.) Yet the very condition of the struggle, if it was to be other than the fruitless warfare with himself which he had experienced under the Law, and which had only taught him to know sin, was that he should know the resurrection from the fleshly life to be already his in Christ, his in the counsels of God, in the divine idea. This knowledge was the 'earnest of the Spirit.' (2 Cor. v. 5.) Without it all his effort, as it quickened the feeling of self, would have deepened the feeling of alienation; with it, as the things behind were forgotten and the old man daily died, a virtue not his own was being wrought into his life—he was becoming the righteousness of God. (2 Cor. v. 21.)

In this lay the demonstration of spirit and power. (1 Cor. ii. 4.) In his own body he bore about the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be manifest therein. But there was another body, which was his as it was Christ's, the body of Christian fellowship, where he found such reality of

demonstration as mere introspection could not give. Here, too, the stigmata of Christ were graven; here the ministration of righteousness was 'writ large,' not on stone, but on tables of the heart and with the Spirit of the living God. (2 Cor. iii. 3.) In the Christian society a new life was being really lived. To this evidence, not to his visions and revelations, St. Paul constantly reverts; and it is one good for all time. For the truth of any practical idea the only possible evidence is its realisation. As the primary Christian idea is that of a moral death into life, as wrought for us and in us by God, so its realisation, which is the evidence of its truth, lies in Christian love —a realisation never complete, because for ever embracing new matter, yet constantly gaining in fulness. All other evidence is fleeting and accidental, but this abides. Tongues cease, prophecies fail, knowledge—the mere unrealised idea—vanisheth away; but charity never faileth: and in the higher life of the Christian society we may recognise it and make it our own. Amid the luxury and fretfulness, the strife and vainglory, which

so noisily surround us, we are apt to ignore it, and thus, while the foundations of practical truth are in debate—while some are requiring a sign, others seeking the wisdom that is in word, others asking who will show them any good—we miss the demonstration which lies nearest us, which may become as near as consciousness itself. Who is there that has not known a simple, self-denying Christian, and known that if he would, he might become like him? Perhaps, wrapped closely in the fleece of conceit, we think lightly of such an one. He is not clever, or he has awkward manners, or a mean appearance. His bodily presence is weak and his speech contemptible. Yet his daily life is to him, as it might be to us if we would assimilate it, that sufficient evidence of God's quickening Spirit, for the lack of which perhaps we are all the while passionately bewailing ourselves. In little, and on a narrow stage—no wider, it may be, than the duties of a sickly teasing household can afford —he is exhibiting that power of the resurrection which still sends healing to the broken-hearted, deliverance to the captives and

recovery of sight to the blind; which sends the missionary to the heathen, the preacher to the poor, the honest student to his struggle with the delusions of sense; because it is the spring of that charity which seeketh not her own and rejoiceth in the truth.

Thus the Church has been the witness of Christ in another than the conventional sense: not as the depositary of a dogma reflecting but faintly that original intuition of the crucified and risen One, in the light of which the blind Saul saw the barrier between Jew and Gentile, between man and God, disappear; but as the slowly articulated expression of the crucified and risen life. The original intuition, depending, as it seems to have done, on peculiar personal and historical conditions, could never be reproduced in its native form and force. It had to be translated into other terms, which might make it available for men who could only see through the eyes of the Jewish and Greek enlightenment of their time. In this altered state it constantly required new supports of the understanding, and suggested new deductions,

which have gradually constituted the theology of the Church. I do not dispute the value of this theology. Most men, who think on such matters, are so steeped in it, that they cannot read St. Paul intelligently at all, without translating him into its formulæ; and to them it commonly affords that intellectual expression without which they could scarcely sustain themselves in the Christian life. But we must not confound the formula with the reality. Dogmatic theology is quite other than the Christian life, quite other than the practical idea on which that life rests. The result of their confusion has been that while men such as Spinoza, who had more real hold on the idea, and better understood the spiritual import of the Christian resurrection than the dogmatic theologians, have been reckoned, and driven to reckon themselves, aliens from the Christian Church, the simplicity of the idea itself has been so lost in artificial schemes of salvation, that, apart from these, men cannot recognise it. Thus, to say that the Christian life issues from the idea of a denial of self, as eternally

wrought out by God but to be renewed by us; and that just because it so issues, it is a life justified and sanctified, though really a return to the simplicity of Christ, seems to many pious men a substitution of moral philosophy for Christianity proper. It is not thus that they account to themselves for the work of the quickening Spirit in and around them. On the other hand, there are men of pure life, holding heroic warfare with the sensual acquiescence of conventional religion, to whom such a statement seems only a refinement on theological fictions, which they reject. Our prime concern, however, is not with the word, not with the theory of either sort of men, but with the power; and this is the power of a present and spiritual resurrection. In their flesh, *i.e.* in their common affections as transformed into a hunger for God or goodness, the life of Christ is here and now manifest (2 Cor. iv. 11); though with the understanding they thrust it far from them; though the one sort externalise it in a miraculous transaction or event, and the others cannot find in it, thus externalised, the source

of their own zeal for man. If we are sincerely sighing for a witness of God's work in man, the denial of it in word will matter little to us when the affirmation is present in power.

It is in Christendom that, according to the providence of God, this power has been exhibited; not indeed either adequately or exclusively, but most fully. In the religions of the East the idea of a death to the fleshly self, as the end of the merely human, and the beginning of a divine life, has not been wanting; nor, as a mere idea, has it been very different from that which is the ground of Christianity. But there it has never been realised in action, either intellectually or morally. The idea of the withdrawal from sense has remained abstract. It has not issued in such a struggle with the superficial view of things, as has gradually constituted the science of Christendom. In like manner that of self-renunciation has never emerged from the esoteric state. It has had no outlet into the life of charity, but a back-way always open into the life of sensual licence, and has been finally mechanised in the artificial

vacancy of the dervish or fakir. We are not on this account to assume, as hasty and passionate theologians would do, that God reveals Himself to man in some other form than reason, or that He suddenly set up the Christian Church as a miraculous institution owing nothing to the other influences of the world, within which all is light, without it all darkness; within which He works unto salvation, without it not at all, or only to condemn and to destroy. Such an assumption is a short cut to conviction which finally leads, as we have daily proof, through a weary round of unbelief. Christianity is cheaply honoured, when it is made exceptional: God is not wisely trusted when declared unintelligible. 'Such honour rooted in dishonour stands; such faith unfaithful makes us falsely true.'[1]

God is for ever reason; and His communication, His revelation, is reason: not, however, abstract reason, but reason as taking a body

[1] 'His honour rooted in dishonour stood,
And faith unfaithful kept him falsely true.'
TENNYSON, *Elaine.*

from, and giving life to, the whole system of experience which makes the history of man. The revelation, therefore, is not made in a day, or a generation, or a century. The divine mind touches, modifies, becomes the mind of man, through a process of which mere intellectual conception is only the beginning, but of which the gradual complement is an unexhausted series of spiritual discipline through all the agencies of social life. In the nations outside Christendom, as a matter of history, this complement has not been vouchsafed, or only in the most limited and elementary way. Hence the idea of death into life, which is the seed of the divine in man, has there lain barren. It has continued bare 'grain.' God in His wisdom has not yet given it a body. Yet is it the same seed which, as sown in Jewish prophecy and Greek philosophy, was the germ of the life of Christendom. The shortcomings of Greek philosophy are, indeed, obvious enough. They distinguish it essentially from Christian philosophy (though the advocates of a thoughtless religiosity would involve both in

a common condemnation), inasmuch as the latter has a far higher form of practical spiritual life for its basis. But we must not confound the genuine philosophy of Greece with that wisdom of the world which St. Paul knew to be foolishness with God. It differed from this as much as now-a-days the faithful quest after hidden truth differs from the dialectic with which the enlightened man of the world flatters his own conceit and confutes his neighbour's; and to include it under St. Paul's condemnation would be as unfair as to apply to the prophets his view of the carnality of Jewish religion. Greek philosophy, like Jewish prophecy, was essentially a struggle upwards from what seems to what is, from sense to reason, from the flesh to the spirit. One as much as the other issued from an active idea, which is not to be regarded as unchristian, but as an undeveloped Christianity. Each too had its practical or social side. If St. Paul all over the Roman world, where he carried the Gospel of Christ, had not found, by river sides or elsewhere, places 'where prayer was

wont to be made,'—social prayer, prayer to God in spirit and truth, which is the true continuance of prophecy—where now would have been Christian worship? If, again, there had not survived, under the organised selfishness of the empire, the idea of self-sacrificing citizenship, which the communities of Greece had originated and its philosophy expressed and expanded, where now would be Christian fellowship? The glory of Christianity is not that its excludes, but that it comprehends; not that it came of a sudden into the world, or that it is given complete in a particular institution, or can be stated complete in a particular form of words; but that it is the expression of a common spirit, which is gathering together all things in one. We cannot say of it, lo, here it is, or lo, there: it is now, but was not then. We go backward, but we cannot reach its source; we look forward, but we cannot foresee its final power. We do it wrong in making it depend on a past event, and in identifying it with the creed of a certain age, or with a visible society established at a certain time. What

we thus seem to gain in definiteness, we lose in permanence of conviction; for importunate enquiry will show us that the event can only be approached through a series of fluctuating interpretations of it, behind which its original nature cannot be clearly ascertained; that the 'visible church' of one age is never essentially the same as that of the next; that it is only in word, or to the intellectually dead, that the creed of the present is the same as the creed of the past.

It is doubtless true that the system of practical ideas, or of life resting on ideas, which we call Christianity, though its roots are as old as mankind, would not exist but for definite past events and actions and personal influences, and that among these some far outweigh all others in importance. There came One who spake as never man spake, yet proclaimed Himself the son of man, and was conscious in the very meanness of human life, in its final shame of death, of the communication of God to Himself, and through Him to mankind. There came another, who, bringing with him certain 'metaphysical' concep-

tions, the result of the philosophy of the time, found them in this Man, whom death could not hold, suddenly become real: who in spirit, yet with a light above the brightness of the sun, saw manifested in Him that which Philo and the Stoics knew must be; even the heavenly Man in whose death all barriers were broken down, that all in the participation of His life might be equal before God. 'The riches of the glory of this mystery' he preached among the Gentiles, even 'Christ in them the hope of glory.' Thus, in sober ecstasy, with visions and revelations and speaking with tongues—in upper chambers, where men breaking bread at their common social meals felt that Christ was among them, and that it was His body they were breaking and communicating—by the foolishness of preaching he founded the Christian Churches. In a generation or two the intuition of the present Christ, which Paul even in his lifetime seems to have been unable to convey to others as it was to himself, had faded away. In its stead came the belief in past events, or in present mysterious transactions, external

to the man, which had to be stated in a creed. For the spontaneous brotherhood, conscious of itself as one body, and that body Christ's, even as the mind that dwelt in it was 'The Lord, the Spirit,' Himself (2 Cor. iii. 17), there arose a regulated and increasingly artificial society, in which the voice of the Spirit was represented by the authoritative utterance of a bishop. For the breaking of bread at the social meal, in token of that self-abandoning fellowship of each with the other as members of Christ's body, which was the perpetual renewal of His sacrifice,—for this sacrament of pure sociality—was substituted an exceptional communication of His body to the individual, no longer purely moral, but dependent on material conditions, and mediation of the priest.

Thus Christ, if I may use the expression, was gradually externalised and mystified. The miraculous overpowered the moral and spiritual, as much as, in the view of St. Paul, the moral and spiritual overpowered the miraculous. In this way, while the Christian religion gained in immediate power over the

world and adapted itself to men, whose apprehensions were too gross for the Pauline intuition, its finer essence, which could draw to itself all knowledge and all goodness, was overlaid with signs and wonders and mysteries, to which, in the long run, both knowledge and the highest goodness must find themselves alien. Yet, when it might be thought that the life of Christ must already have ceased to be a spiritual presence and become a wonder of the past—more, probably, than two generations after St. Paul had gone to his rest—there arose a disciple, whose very name we know not (for he sought not his own glory and preferred to hide it under the repute of another), who gave that final spiritual interpretation to the person of Christ, which has for ever taken it out of the region of history and of the doubts that surround all past events, to fix it in the purified conscience as the immanent God. The highest result of ancient philosophy had been the conception of the world as a system of thought, related to God as His word or expression, i.e. as the spoken thought is related to the man. This conception, how-

ever, great as it was, did not present God under moral attributes, nor did it bring Him near to the conscience of the individual. But in Christ, the writer whom the Church calls St. John, saw this divine thought manifesting itself in human life as Truth and Love, and that not merely or fully through a past visible existence—though such existence had been vouchsafed as 'a sign'—but through a spirit which should dwell in men, drawn out of the world, won from sense and the flesh, for ever. The presence of this spirit was the presence of the Son, so that the perfect knowledge and love which subsisted from eternity between the Father and the Son might be reproduced in men as the knowledge of God and love of each other. 'I will not leave you orphans,' says the Christ of St. John to His disciples, 'I will come to you.' (xiv. 16, 17.) He thus comes, as the context explains, in the spirit of truth. In this spirit they are with Him where He is, even in the presence of God (xvii. 24), and the love wherewith God has loved Him is in them, even as He is in them. Those who have

been able to receive this saying, in the spiritual sight of Christ have seen the Father; in worshipping Christ, they have worshipped God under the attributes of personal intelligence and love. Him whom they have not seen with the bodily eye or heard with the hearing of the ear, whom they have not approached through evidence of their own senses or through transmitted evidence of the senses of others, they have yet believed and loved, and in loving have rejoiced with joy unspeakable and full of glory. Such believing love, once wrought into the life and character, 'not in word but in power,' can survive all shocks of criticism, all questions as to historical events. It will not indeed despise such questions. Rather it will welcome them, as setting it free from accidental supports, and teaching it to know itself. It needs no evidence of the presence of God, or the work of Christ the Spirit, for it is that presence and work itself. It *is* the crucifixion of the flesh, it *is* the new life, it *is* the resurrection of the dead.

'This is a hard saying,' it may be replied: 'who can hear it?' A God who made us and

knows us, as from without; a Christ who at a certain time did certain miraculous acts on our behalf, and who now, having left us certain commands, is at the right hand of God exalted, to return again at some future time and judge us according to our obedience to His commands,—these, it may be said, are intelligible objects. There are strong grounds for believing in them, and as believed in they influence our actions through fear, and hope, and gratitude. But an immanent God, a God present *in* the believing love of Him and the brethren, a Christ within us, a continuous resurrection,—these are mere thoughts of our own; they are not 'objective;' if there is nothing else to constrain and restrain us, we are left to ourselves.

Present limits do not allow of such language being considered in detail. A little reflection may show us that we cannot really get outside thought or ourselves, though thought may find that it is not merely its own, and the self lose its selfishness. It is in himself and in his thought, which yet is in the truest sense a revelation, and a revelation

through Christian influence, that each one of us finds God, if he find Him at all. In those who deem otherwise of thought and the self, —who must put God at a distance, or into a mystery, in order to recognise Him ; who hold that a revelation which is not through signs and wonders, is no revelation at all—it is not religion but logic which is at fault. Just so far as they make their own the Christian doctrine of the indwelling spirit, whose quickening, enlightening, interceding power *is* the presence of Christ, even as Christ is God, they are superior to their own logic. So long, however, as their dependence on it seems to themselves to continue, they will need evidence of God's operation in past or present miracle, in an inspired book or in sacraments, and it is matter of thankfulness that the cogency of such evidence should be what it is. Let no one rashly tamper with it. Rather let us make our own calling and election sure. Let those of us who are seeking, and perhaps intellectually finding, a nearer and surer witness, take heed that it be to us not in word but in power. Let us beware lest, like the

enlightened Christians of Corinth, professing to be spiritual, we be found carnal.

St. Paul, as was observed at the outset, does not bid these men renounce their claims to 'spirituality,' but act according to it. He bates no jot of his ideal gospel. The sense of the discrepancy between the idea and its realisation, which the care of the churches forced on him, only moves him to a re-assertion of the idea as alone giving impulse to the realisation. Even to the Galatians, bewitched with Jewish ritualism, it is still, 'we live in the Spirit; *therefore* let us walk in the Spirit.' (Gal. v. 25.) Let our actual conduct be spiritual, even as is our ideal life. So to the Corinthians, translating the Spirit's privilege into vain-glory and licence, it is still, 'All things are yours, *but* ye are not your own; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are his.' (1 Cor. iii. 22, vi. 19, 20.) From the prison (to the Philippians) the voice is still the same, 'God worketh in us: therefore let us work out our own salvation with fear and trembling.' (Phil. ii. 12, 13.)

This work, which is at once God's and our

own, and in which therefore His presence is witnessed not with signs from without, but with demonstration from within, is summed up in the one word, Charity, or Christian love. Mere knowledge puffeth up, as St. Paul says, but charity edifieth. Charity, that is to say, is constructive. In the temple of Christian fellowship, where no man seeks his own, but every one another's good; in the fabric of true knowledge, which without figure of speech is the work of the same spiritual yearning—charity is building a presence-chamber of God, which, though filled with His fulness, may yet, so far as the same charity is in us, be no other than the chamber of our own heart. No one, it is often said, doubts of his own existence; nor does any one practically doubt of the correlative existence of God, though the notion of such existence is compassed with difficulties of language and logic which lead some to deny it in word. But as it is little for me to know *that* I am, unless I know *what* I am, so the mere consciousness of God, to which upon analysis we find that the speech even of the 'Atheist' testifies, is bootless if it is merely

that of an unknown power beyond oneself. Is this a loving and understanding, a reconciled and reconciling power? That is the question, and it is a question to which the one abiding answer is the life of charity. In anticipation indeed, or by 'an earnest of the Spirit,' it must be answered to begin with, in order to render that life possible; and this preliminary answer, as it came to St. Paul's converts in a sudden light of intellectual conviction, so to us, who have had a Christian education, should be furnished by ideas which have lain about us from our infancy, and which later reflection ought to have made intelligently our own. It is ill for us, if in youth, by looseness of talk or deed, we let our hold on them slacken for an instant. But their mere retention as ideas is impossible. Their power must give them a body in labour for truth and the brethren, or it will cease to be, and with it will vanish the presence of which they are the first disclosure. Amid a world of forgetfulness and decay, in the sight of his own shortcomings and limitations, or on the edge of the tomb, he alone who has

found his soul in losing it, who in singleness of mind has lived in order to love and understand, will find that the God who is near to him as his own conscience has a face of light and love.

There is a danger, as I am painfully aware, lest, after all, this should seem 'a tale of little meaning, though the words be strong;' lest this realisation of the idea of a loving God, which is to prove its truth and power, should seem very remote from reality. How, it may be asked, is this life of charity to be attained, either in its more obviously practical or in its more philosophic form? What likeness to it has the easy life we lead here, or the after life of respectable citizenship, which, as cut out for us by circumstances, we are likely to lead for the rest of our days? Few of us have faculty or opportunity to be philosophers or missionaries or preachers to the poor, and if we had, is it certain that we should find ourselves much nearer the ideal life? Would not each of those high callings turn out to be an affair of habit, very much like any other; requiring peculiar gifts, no doubt,

yet apt to be debased by egotism in proportion to the success attained by these gifts?

Such language has a partial truth, and it is a truth which is likely to come near home to young men, who have been shaken in the simple faith of childhood, but have as yet learnt little from the discipline of life. Conscious of this, apprehensive of that most fatal scepticism which attends the reaction from an ideal found to be hollow, and knowing too well with how little of personal example he can enforce his words, a teacher here will be apt to speak seldom, and below his conviction, of the possibility in common action of renewing the self-sacrifice of the eternal Son. Yet the least experienced among us must know that it is not in the outward cast of a life, but in the way of living it, that the spirit of a man is shown, and that there are those about him in whose character, though with no outward mark of distinction, and perhaps under a surface of yet unconquered weaknesses, the love of God and the brethren is the ruling power. All he has to do is to share in the higher spirit of such men. He

need not make a rush after the heroic, or seek to jump out of his circumstances. The end to be attained is indeed infinite ; but he need not therefore vainly try to swell his own effort to a like infinity, for it is already attained for him. The sacrifice has been offered, the goal has been won. God is for ever perfect light and love. It is for us, under the limitations of a petty human life, to take such personal hold on this perfection as may fit us for its fuller communication when, in His good time, these limitations are taken away. To do this requires, doubtless, much thought and prayer and travail, but not a revolution in our surroundings. We may be doing it here and now, if (in the words of the text) 'with sincerity and truth we keep the Christian feast. Let us consider, finally, for a moment the special application of these words to ourselves.

It will at once be understood that 'Passover' here means the Paschal Lamb. Under this figure Christ is several times presented to us in the New Testament: probably so in the verse of the Revelation which speaks of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the

world, and in the Baptist's utterance, 'Behold the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sin of the world;' certainly so in the passage of St. John which applies to Christ the rule as to the paschal lamb, 'a bone of Him shall not be broken,' and in that of the First Epistle ascribed to St. Peter, which speaks of the 'blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot, fore-ordained before the foundation of the world.' It is necessary further, in order to understand the full force of the text, to remember that the paschal lamb was not only sacrificed, but eaten, and that the eating of it constituted the paschal supper or feast. As then the sacrifice of Christ is presented under the figure of the slaying of the lamb, so our continuous participation in His sacrificed person is presented as the keeping of the feast. The sacrifice is already made—made for us from eternity; the Lamb has been slain from the foundation of the world: but we have to perpetuate the sacrifice in ourselves. We are, as it is put under a like figure elsewhere, to eat the flesh of Christ, as the Jews ate of the sacrificed lamb.

Christians are in some way to make the person of Christ their own. They do this, the feast is kept for ever by the Christian society, in the life of charity. The conditions on our part, as individuals, of joining in the feast are sincerity and truth. These are the unleavened bread without which we may not feed upon the Lamb, but with which we may: and even in our life here, secluded from great achievements of beneficence, they may surely be ours.

By 'sincerity' (*εἰλικρίνεια*) here is to be understood, I think, perfect openness towards God; that clearness of the soul in which nothing interferes with its penetration by the divine sunlight. Given this openness on our part, Christ, the revealed God, will gradually find His way into our souls, not in word but in power. We must be clear from vice, clear from self-indulgence, clear from self-conceit. How imperfectly do we attain this clearness, yet how can we wonder, till we attain it, that we lack the witness of God? We talk, perhaps, half-sorrowfully, half-complacently, of the demoralising, or unchristianising, tendencies of modern life. Opinion, it is said, is

fundamentally unsettled; science keeps encroaching on the old faith; the lineaments of the God whom our fathers worshipped are blurred by philosophy; and meanwhile an enlightened Hedonism seems competent to answer all practical questions. It is no fault of the individual if, amid such influences, he loses the thought of God's presence and the consciousness of His love, which indeed can only be retained by taking refuge in mysteries or going out of the world.

This is the foppery of men who want new excuses for old sins. It is still our sins and nothing else that separate us from God. Philosophy and science, to those who seek not to talk of them but to know their power, do but render His clearness more clear, and the freedom of His service a more perfect freedom. His witness grows with time. In great books and great examples, in the gathering fulness of spiritual utterance which we trace through the history of literature, in the self-denying love which we have known from the cradle, in the moralising influences of civil life, in the closer fellowship of the Christian society, in

the sacramental ordinances which represent that fellowship, in common worship, in the message of the preachers through which, amid diversity of stammering tongues, one spirit still speaks—here God's sunshine is shed abroad without us. If it does not reach within the heart, it is because the heart has a darkness of its own, some unconquered selfishness which prevents its relation to Him being one of 'sincerity and truth.'

I cannot now trace in detail the forms of this selfishness, nor is there much use in doing so. They are manifold, doubtless, but their source is simple, and subtlety is wasted in their unravelment. The grosser among them, I hope, are little known among us—that, for instance, which the world lightly calls looseness, and which religious people are apt to call impurity. Neither the term of extenuation nor that of reproach fully expresses the baseness of that hideous wrong against Christ's body—the body of human fellowship—which outrages it in its tenderest part. Let no one dream that he can be guilty of such wrong, and yet find the loving presence within him,

of which that fellowship is the true conveyance. If he has been guilty of it but once, let him be sure that if he would have deliverance from its moral result, he must indeed seek it carefully, and with tears. Most of us, however, have perhaps more to fear from a more refined self-indulgence, from habits of luxury or indolence, and from nameless desires after all things sweet and pleasant, which because they do not issue in overt vice are counted harmless, but which yet, as in our heart of hearts we know, keep us off from God, and from that pure self-renouncing spirit which is His manifestation among men. Probably we surround them with a fence of intellectual self-excusing jugglery, which may in time become impenetrable to the assault of that higher reason which speaks through our own conscience, and through the doctrine or example of all the great teachers of mankind. To this jugglery, however, we may have one answer always ready. Prayer is a wish referred to God, and the possibility of such reference, save in matters of mere indifference, is the test of the purity of the wish. Can we then,

let us ask ourselves, pray to God with an enlightened conscience for our continuance in the habit, or for the satisfaction of the desire in question? If not, let us pluck them off, and cast them from us. To do so, indeed, may be the work of years; but once let the higher resolve be in force, and the discipline of life will gradually neutralise or transmute the passions which thwart the single mind.

Another cloak of darkness which the soul hugs in exclusion of the light of God is self-conceit. In an 'intellectual society' every one knows this, as he knows the plague of his own heart. It is something very different from that which is often ill denounced as 'intellectual pride,' but which is really the proper virtue of those who are not children of the bondwoman but of the free. Such pride, indeed, is no other than the aspiration of reason to attain its fulness in God, which is the only source of true religion. Yet who that knows anything of such aspiration does not know also how perpetually it is crossed by the importunities of the pitiful earthly self,

claiming credit to itself for the aspiration? Only by the consciousness that we are 'workers together with God,' since the best we can do for ourselves has been done for us by Him, and by the consequent growing absorption in great ideas and great causes, can this haunting presence be laid. The higher, indeed, the effort with which it associates itself, the more readily is it got rid of. It prefers baser company, and generally where is least intellectual aspiration, there is most intellectual conceit. Is it not so with us? In this place how much cleverness, and more conceit of cleverness, goes to how little true spiritual achievement. The reason is plain. We stand by the water, but it is not our real mind to drink. Our vocation keeps us in the presence of the best thoughts of the greatest men. We are, or may be, conversant with the sifted wisdom of the ages. We are in the highway and mid-current of spiritual progress. Yet are we not ourselves standing still, or moving in a trivial round of intellectual luxuries? Is not our heart shut against the voice that calls us out of our-

selves, and busy with the idol of its own self-decoration? How much of our real interest is going to the quest after truth and God, how much to the attainment of skill in writing clever articles and saying 'good things,' which have no result but to make our brethren offend, and to surround ourselves with an atmosphere of irreverence and unreality over which God's Spirit broods in vain? He that seeketh findeth what he seeks; and if in reading and thinking we look merely for a testimony to our own cleverness, we shall find probably what we seek, but no higher witness. We know that egotism has to be outwardly suppressed, if ordinary good fellowship is to be possible. Much more must it be mortified and raised again to an altered life, if we would attain the fellowship of the Son, and with it the spirit of adoption and the truth which makes us free.

If this riddance of selfishness had to be complete before we could have any share in the Christian feast, any participation in the eternal sacrifice, we might indeed despair.

We should be like Saul, still struggling with a body of death, of which he could not be relieved under the Law. But for the Christian, as we have seen, the sacrifice is already complete in God, and is being gradually re-enacted in the true charities of life, in a Church invisible, but operative all around us. In it the Spirit already dwells with us, and is striving to be in us. Each weakest effort on our part is answered by His prevailing motion. If we do but open our hearts at a single point, the spiritual water and blood will find an entrance, will purge our egotism and complete the sacrifice. In this confidence, 'as sorrowful, yet alway rejoicing,' we shall go freely on our appointed way, knowing that it may become to us a discipline of God, and that there is no way so beaten but that things true and honest and just and lovely may be found in it. The Christian ordinances are at hand for our refreshment, and if we are wise we shall not neglect them. We cannot afford to individualise ourselves even in respect of outward symbols. We do wrong to ourselves and them, if we allow any

intellectual vexation at the mode in which they may be presented to us to prevent us from their due use. If we are really seeking to live as members one of another in the general assembly of the first-born, why do we not gladly approach the table where in the simplest of all rites that mutual membership is expressed? We shall not value such expression the less, because to us it is only an expression. It is in the hidden life of the Christian society, as we hold—in pureness, in knowledge, in long-suffering, in love unfeigned—that the true table of the Lord is spread, and His cup for ever flows. Here is the bloodless altar, the continued sacrifice, because here is the perpetual Agapê, the communion of good-will. To this spiritual feast, in which the God-man gradually imparts Himself to the soul, the 'Holy Communion' of bread and wine is related as a mode of speech to thought. As seasonable utterance is needed to give strength and definiteness to a thought, to bring it back to the individual when he has almost lost it, to quicken the consciousness of its being shared

by others; so may this ordinance strengthen and refresh the thought of our common spiritual interest in God. Its primitive social character we cannot indeed recall, any more than the ecstatic vision of Christ among them which was granted to the early disciples; yet still to us, if with hearts pure of vice and humbly set on living loyally as Christian citizens, we partake of the symbolic supper, without vision or miracle or mystery, but in moral power, God in Christ—a loving and understanding God—may be known in the breaking of bread.

FAITH.

2 COR. v. 7.

'*We walk by faith, not by sight.*

FOR the word translated 'Faith,' as used in the New Testament, it would be impossible, according to any fair method of interpretation, to assign a single meaning. Between its various senses a connection can no doubt be traced, but from Faith, as the simple recognition of the claim of Jesus to be the Messiah—the sense in which it is commonly used in the Acts and often in the Gospels—to that Faith which, according to St. Paul's conception, is the communication of the Divine Spirit, and by which Christ, as the revealed God, dwells in our hearts, there is an interval which no single definition can cover. But difficult as it would be by any

one formula to represent all that the word conveys, even as used by St. Paul alone, it is less difficult to state what it does not convey. Throughout the New Testament, as has often been pointed out, its meaning is never determined by that opposition to reason, on which it might almost be said that its whole force depends as used alike by theologians and men of science in the literature of the day. Whatever may be the validity of this opposition in itself, as applied to the interpretation of the New Testament it is a misleading substitute for the truly scriptural antithesis between Faith and Sight. 'Because thou hast seen, thou hast believed; blessed are they that have not seen and yet have believed,' says our Lord to Thomas according to the story in the fourth Gospel; and under the same idea throughout that Gospel we find the true or highest faith represented as that which by a purely spiritual act takes Christ, as the manifestation of God, into the soul without waiting for conviction by sensible signs. Such faith is typified in Nathaniel, who accepts Christ as the Son of God by an imme-

diate spiritual recognition in response to that by which Christ recognises him—who knows as he is known—and who in consequence is promised under a figure an ultimate intuition of some free commerce between God and the perfected man. It is typified again in the Samaritans who believe Christ on His mere word, and in the 'nobleman' to whom our Lord says by way of trial, 'except ye see signs and wonders, ye will not believe,' but in whom He discerns the higher faith which can accept the simple word 'Thy son liveth.' Contrasted with it is the hardness of heart which asks for some sign, as convincing as the miraculous manna, that it 'may see and believe.' Those who so ask, instead of a sign are told of the necessity, in order to true spiritual life, of that participation in Christ's self-surrendered will which is figured by the eating His flesh and drinking His blood. When some of the disciples, understanding the figure literally, murmur at the hard saying, they are only warned more emphatically against the 'carnal' mind which, as it had prompted the demand for a sign, so likewise prevented

a true understanding of Christ's words. 'It is the Spirit that quickeneth, the flesh'—or, as we might say, the satisfaction of the senses—'profiteth nothing. The words that I have spoken, they are Spirit.' Being Spirit, they could only, to use St. Paul's phrase, be spiritually discerned. 'The natural man'—the man who walked by sight, not by faith, and therefore required a sign—could not receive them. They were foolishness to him.

It is characteristic, no doubt, of the fourth Gospel that, while thus opposing the sensible to the spiritual and representing the highest faith as independent of signs, it yet insists on the sensible evidence which God gave of Himself as manifested in Christ. The words with which the Johannine epistle opens—'That which we have seen with our eyes, and our hands have handled of the Word of life, declare we unto you'—have a softened echo throughout the Gospel. 'The Word was made flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory.' 'This beginning of miracles did Jesus, and manifested forth His glory.' To Martha, hesitating to have

the stone removed from her brother's grave, Jesus says that 'if she will believe, she shall see the glory of God;' and again to Philip, 'He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father.' Thus an accommodation is effected between the traditional belief in Jesus as the Messiah, who had proved His Messianic office by miraculous signs, and the consciousness of God as a spirit revealed not in signs but in the faith of the spiritual man. Faith in its highest form did not need to wait for miraculous signs; where it was wholly wanting, no such signs could create it; yet they had been granted out of mercy to those who, though not of the world, were still in it. Even then, it was only an antecedent faith that could read them aright as a manifestation of eternal truths, as an utterance of the Word which was from the beginning. To the unbelieving, to those who sought honour one of another, not that which cometh of God only, they remained mere wonders, not a medium for the Spirit that quickeneth.

With St. Paul the freedom of faith from dependence on sensible signs is still more

marked. With St. John, as we have seen, the relation of faith to miracle is not indeed that of effect to cause: faith is rather the condition of the significance of the miraculous sign: still the sign elicits and strengthens a faith already there. Those who believe see, and seeing believe more fully and surely. In St. Paul we do not find even such secondary dependence of faith upon miraculous evidence. The relation of signs to faith is rather that of an effect. He regards faith as making its sign in the 'manifestation of the Spirit and of power' among the Christian congregations, but he never treats anything sensible as its source or even its occasion. It works from within outwards: it is not conveyed within from any source external to itself. Its source is the Spirit of God, and itself is that Spirit, as conveyed to us in the form of an earnest or first-fruits, under such limitations as the earthly tabernacle, the bondage of corruption, still imposes. Of the mode of conveyance, as he conceived it, St. Paul tells us little. 'Faith cometh by hearing'—by the Spirit of God, as revealed in one man,

awakening an answer from the same Spirit, hitherto silent, in another. On the import of the message conveyed, as a promise of deliverance from sin and of the reconciliation of men with God, and through Him with each other, he insists much. For signs by which the divine authority of the message should be attested, as distinct from its import, he does not seem to have seen the necessity. He had indeed 'received,' as he tells us, the traditional account of our Lord's last supper with the disciples; of His announcement to them of 'the new covenant in His blood;' of His death for our sins; of His burial, and resurrection on the third day. How much else he had received of the tradition afterwards embodied in the Gospels we have no means of knowing. But he never appeals to any miraculous events of our Lord's life—not even to the resurrection—as evidence in the sense which later theology has attached to the word. He does not demand our faith in certain truths 'above reason' on the ground of miraculous proofs of divine authority given by a revealer of these truths. The resurrection

of Christ is to him not evidence of a revelation, but the thing revealed. The death of the believer to sin, which becomes a new life unto God, he regards as part of the same process by which Christ died and rose again —a process continued in the mighty deeds wrought in the Christian congregation, and to be completed in the deliverance of the 'creature itself from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God.' All is one continued 'ministration of the Spirit'—an unveiling of God in the world and in the consciousness of man. That is the only revelation of which St. Paul knows. Faith is not an acceptance of such revelation upon evidence: it is the first stage of the revelation itself, of which love and knowledge are to be the completion. It is the awakening of the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry Abba, Father, but which has still 'no language but a cry.' It is opposed indeed to the 'wisdom of this world,' but is itself the first communication of what St. Paul calls the 'reason of Christ,' which again is identified

with the 'Spirit that searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God.'

Though most of us have been hearing and reading St. Paul's words from our childhood, language of this kind is apt to strike us as unmeaning. It seems as if we could not reduce it to statements which should be either speculatively true or have any practical bearing on our own lives. Thus we either leave it aside altogether, or translate it into terms which have become the current coin of theological controversy, but in which its native significance is more or less completely lost. St. Paul's theology, founded on a personal experience in the light of which he interpreted the relations of man to God, inevitably changed its character in becoming a popular creed. Such terms as forgiveness, reconciliation, and salvation, instead of representing experiences of the believer—processes of his spiritual life—came to represent certain divine transactions, in which the believer had no personal part, though through faith he had the benefit of them in the acquisition

of final happiness. The death and resurrection of Christ ceased to be looked upon as perpetually re-enacted in the surrender of the fleshly self and the substitution for it of a new man in the moral life. They became past events by which certain blessings had been obtained for us or divine testimony given to an authority claiming our obedience. The identification of the believer with Christ was no longer realised through a consciousness operative in the Christian society, but was supposed to be effected in some mode, mystical not moral, by the sacraments. The gift of the Spirit, instead of being understood as that recognition of an eternal relationship between God and man which carries with it a new insight into the things of God and a new energy of love, was reduced to a supernatural agency guiding the utterance of certain men and the government of the Church.

Just in so far as what had been according to the Pauline view the realities of the Christian life were relegated to a region of mystery external to the Christian himself, 'Faith'

too sank to a lower significance. With St. Paul it is the consciousness of the life hidden with Christ in God as it becomes under the conditions of another life which we now live in the flesh—*in* the flesh, as he would say, but not *after* the flesh. Faith is no more faith in this sense, when the life of Christ is no longer regarded as one which the believer in any real sense himself lives. It becomes merely the condition upon which the benefit of a certain 'opus operatum' is extended to him. The nature of this condition has been conceived in various ways, implying various degrees of true moral value. Having come to be understood as no more than an acceptance of the authority of the Church and obedience to its rules, it was restored by Luther to the meaning of an assurance of sonship in Christ, founded on personal experience. This was so far a gain, but it did not carry with it—most Christians would say that it would have been pernicious if it had carried with it—any change in the view of man's redemption as achieved by past historical events. The death and resurrection were not

interpreted into present realities within the experience of the believer. They continued to be looked upon as mysterious transactions, in their intrinsic nature incomprehensible, by which forgiveness and salvation had been obtained for us; and in consequence the results thus obtained could not be regarded as properly processes of the moral or spiritual life. In ordinary Protestant theology, forgiveness is still something else than the moral act of putting off the old man; salvation something else than putting on the new. That forgiveness and salvation should be regarded not as something earned by the individual for himself, but as the free gift of God, is no doubt an essential point in the Gospel which St. Paul preached. On any other view it would be another gospel which, indeed, as he might have said, would be not another but no gospel at all. But a free forgiveness, an unearned salvation, need not on that account be other than states into which by the self-communication of God the human spirit is brought; and we are nearer to the mind of St. Paul when we consider them as such states

which, in the life of faith or life according to the spirit, become ours, than when we look on them as external blessings, won for us by the crucified and risen Christ, and which Faith is the condition of our appropriating.

Did not St. Paul then, it will be asked, regard the death and resurrection of Christ as 'objective' facts—events which had taken place quite independently of any change in his own mind—and in virtue of which he, or any one else who would believe, might be justified and saved? Undoubtedly he did; but his attitude towards them was not that of a man believing certain events to have happened upon evidence. He seemed to himself to die daily and rise again with Christ, and it was this moral and personal experience that gave reality in his eyes to the supposed historical events, bringing the forgiveness and reconciliation which were involved in Christ's death and resurrection within the sphere of his own consciousness, and leaving no room for faith in the secondary sense of an acceptance of certain propositions as true upon trust. To him therefore that difficulty

did not exist which theological controversy inevitably raises for the modern mind. The difficulty is shortly this.

On the one hand, we are called upon to regard Faith as the condition of our attaining the highest spiritual life—as that which makes the difference between the man who is as God would have him to be and the man who is not. If we are honest with ourselves, we shall admit that something best called Faith—a prevailing conviction of our presence to God and His to us, of His gracious mind towards us, working in and with and through us, of our duty to our fellow-men as our brethren in Him—has been the source of whatever has been best in us and in our deeds. If we have enough experience and sympathy to interpret fairly the life of the world around us, we shall admit that faith of this sort is the salt of the earth. Through it, below the surface of circumstance and custom, humanity is being renewed day by day, and unless our heart is sealed by selfishness and sophistry, though we may not consciously share in the process, there will be men and times that make us reverentially

feel its reality. Who can hear an unargumentative and unrhetorical Christian minister appeal to his people to cleanse their hearts and to help each other as sons of God in Christ, without feeling that he touches the deepest and strongest spring of noble conduct in mankind? So far the office which theologians assign to faith seems to be one which we have the strongest moral warrant for allowing to it. But, on the other hand, the object of Faith is declared to be the work of Christ, consisting specially in the incarnation by which He took on Him our nature, in the death by which He purchased the forgiveness of sins, and the resurrection by which He opened to us the gate of everlasting life. These were events, continuous no doubt in their effects, but which took place in an historical past. Faith accordingly, as having the work of Christ for its object, is regarded as necessarily involving the belief that propositions, asserting the actual occurrence of these events, are true. The saving Faith, on which Protestants insist, is doubtless held to imply much more than such an acceptance of certain

propositions; but though much more, it cannot, according to the common conception, be less than this. A belief, not different in kind from the belief that Cæsar was murdered on the Ides of March, must be an integral part of it, if its object is the work of Christ in the sense above explained.

The Faith then which is supposed to be demanded of us as Christians involves two elements, which, to say the least, are wholly different—on the one side, a certain intellectual assent of a kind which, if the propositions assented to concerned any other events than those purporting to convey a divine revelation, we should say could make no difference to the heart or spirit or character—call it what we will—which is alone of absolute value in a man; on the other side, a certain attitude or disposition which belongs distinctively to this 'inner man' and gives us our worth as moral or spiritual beings. The deepening of the conception of Faith in the Lutheran theology only brings this discrepancy into clearer relief. The more strongly we insist that Faith is a personal and conscious relation of the man to

God, forming the principle of a new life, not perhaps observable by others, but which the man's own conscience recognises, the more awkward becomes its dependence on events believed to have happened in the past. The evidence for their having happened may be exceedingly cogent, but at any rate the appreciation of it depends on processes of reasoning which it would be a moral paradox to deny that a man may perform correctly without being the better, and incorrectly without being the worse. It has often been asked whether we can seriously suppose a man to be condemned in the sight of God for misunderstanding a proposition in divinity; and though the question may have been irreverently put, there can be but one answer to it It is not on any estimate of evidence, correct or incorrect, that our true holiness can depend. Neither if we believe certain documents to be genuine and authentic can we be the better, nor if we believe it not, the worse. There is thus an inner contradiction in that conception of Faith which makes it a state of mind involving peace with God and love towards all

men, and at the same time makes its object that historical work of Christ, of which our knowledge depends on evidence of uncertain origin and value.

It will perhaps be said that our assent upon historical evidence to those articles of the Creed which relate to the miraculous events of Christ's life is different in kind from our assent to any other statements of remote history asserting that certain events have happened, just because the events, which the two kinds of statement severally purport to relate, are entirely different. When events are said to have happened as a medium of God's revelation of Himself to man, it is not by an intellectual process of estimating evidence, but by our convictions about God and by what our hearts demand of Him, that we are determined to believe or disbelieve their reality. Thus the Faith which accepts the truth of the Gospel story, and that which, as an assurance of God's love, renews the inner man and seeks to impart itself to all mankind, form one homogeneous process. The consciousness of sin is already the promise

and potency of Faith. It determines the soul to believe the narrative which tells how the Son of God took on Him our nature and obtained our free forgiveness. The same longing after God, which welcomes the record of this revelation, having received it, becomes that satisfied love which is Faith in its highest form. Now in this view there is no doubt truth, though it scarcely warrants that inference from the source of belief in a supposed event to the reality of the event which Christian apologists are apt to draw. It is true, no doubt, that it has not been on historical evidence that any one has ever been brought to believe in Christ to the saving of his soul. To most of us it is under the name of Christ that all thoughts of God have come since first we were capable of them. God, so to speak, has been incarnate to us, has died and risen again for us in the person of Jesus, ever since there has been for us a God at all. Thought first becomes definite in language, and it is in the language which the creeds furnish that the bare consciousness of God which is involved in the consciousness

of ourselves—the yearning after Him which is inseparable from the impulse to fulfil ourselves—has become a working theory of the relation between God and man. Hence the great concern of the best Christian teachers has been, and when they are wise enough to stop their ears against the clamours of scepticism still is, not to win assent upon the evidence to the miraculous narrative of the Gospels—an assent in most cases already secured by habit, and otherwise scarcely to be obtained by argument—but to bring their people to enact in their own hearts and lives the work which the creeds rehearse; not to convince them that Christ was miraculously born and died and rose again, but so to affect them as that they shall die and rise again with Him and live as those to whom their sins have been forgiven and the gate of eternal life thrown open. The mode of inner life, which is thus recognised as alone giving spiritual value to the acceptance of the historical record of Christ's work, has already in germ been the determining cause of its acceptance by those, from St. Paul downwards, who

have not like ourselves learnt their religion in its language. There has been some spiritual process going on in them, such as the conflict described by St. Paul in Rom. vii. between the law of his mind or reason and the law of sin in his members, which has made the acceptance of the Gospel narrative seem a divinely-revealed deliverance, but which was after all the natural parent of the seemingly altered life that followed the acceptance. The feeling of helpless alienation from God through the flesh, from which St. Paul found sudden relief in the recognition of Jesus as the Son of God in whom, sent in the likeness of sinful flesh, God had condemned sin in the flesh, itself gave reality to the message which brought the relief, and which enabled it, surviving in principle though altered in form, from a spirit of bondage to become a spirit of adoption. There have been many in all ages, whether nursed in Christianity or no, whether they have been left unacquainted with the New Testament or whether it has remained to them not an unknown or incredible but an unmeaning tale, to whom at some crisis

of their lives the record of St. Paul's deliverance has come as life from the dead. The account of his case is also the account of theirs. A new man has been forming in them —the sign of its presence being perhaps the more conscious antagonism of the old or a more wilful adherence to some mode of life or rule of action which has long ceased to satisfy—but till it has received some assurance of divine recognition and help, it is weak from ignorance of its proper strength and is merely a source of inward unrest. In the Gospel history, as interpreted by St. Paul, it finds the needed assurance. It does not wait to balance evidence or curiously investigate the sources of the history. It seems to have passed from bondage into a glorious liberty, and that through an announcement of facts received from without: yet in truth, there is no break of continuity between the new life and the old. It was from the old sense of bondage that the announcement which brought deliverance derived at once its character and its certainty. The faith which accepted it was also the faith which interpreted it. The

faith which accepted and interpreted it was also the faith which had inwardly demanded it; and the faith which demanded, accepted, and interpreted it is also the faith which lives and works upon it.

The practical Christian faith, thus formed and sustained, is thoroughly at one with itself. It is not in it, but in the current theological conception of it, that there lies the contradiction of which I have previously spoken. An assent to propositions upon evidence is no intrinsic element in it, nor that on which it ultimately depends. Its object is not past events, but a present, reconciled, and indwelling God. Its interest in the work of Christ is in this as a *finished* work; i.e. in present relations with God which Christ's work is thought to have rendered possible. It is no doubt historically conditioned; but it is not on an intellectual estimate of its own conditions that it depends for being what it is. Without the Christian tradition it would not have been what it is, but a judgment as to the authenticity of that tradition, though it has hitherto followed from it almost as a matter

of course, is not essential to it as a spiritual state. It is upon the formation of a theory about faith that it comes to be regarded as necessarily dependent on assent to propositions concerning past events. Controversy compels the faithful to justify their faith. In its true nature Faith can be justified by nothing but itself. Like the consciousness of God and of duty—of which indeed it is but another mode—it is a primary formative principle, which cannot be deduced or derived from anything else. Any apparent derivation of it is inevitably a circular process. This, however, is what the understanding is slow to admit. It seeks for an explanatory antecedent of Faith just as it might of any event in nature. Hence as Christian theology supervened on Christian faith, the latter, pressed for its reason why, could only appeal to the ostensible facts embodied in the tradition of the Church; which was in effect to ascribe its origin to an assent given in the past to a certain interpretation of certain events, while in truth both interpretation and assent were the result of the Faith supposed to be derived

from them. Faith thus came to found itself, or rather to suppose itself founded, upon dogma: *i.e.* upon propositions representing neither demonstrable truths of science, nor ultimate conditions necessary to the possibility of experience and knowledge, nor formative ideas of reason, nor imperatives of morality, but either miraculous transactions, or deductions from and explanations of those supposed transactions. Nor could the process of theorising upon its origin fail to react upon Faith itself. It was not that one man was accounting for the faith of another, but that the faithful were adjusting their faith to the demands of their own understanding. Hence dogma, a theory of Faith as originating in miracle, has come to be regarded by those, whose faith is really a certain disposition of the spirit towards God and man, as part and parcel of their Faith itself; and though zeal for dogma is often related in inverse proportion to the power of faith in the higher sense, yet the latter cannot but suffer from disturbance of a doctrine which has for ages been the accepted compromise between the conscious-

ness of God and the importunities of the understanding, and which has wrought itself into the language and institutions of all the churches.

Why then, it may be asked, except out of wilful mischief, should the supposed dogmatic basis of Faith be disturbed at all? It is admitted that Faith, as the spiritual source of the Christian life, is the highest condition of human character. Why, for the sake of rectifying what is at worst a speculative mistake into which Christians have generally fallen as to the genesis of their faith, should we run the risk of making that condition more difficult to reach or to maintain? The answer is, that an inquiry into the relation between the life of faith and the order of the world is not one as to which it rests with the good pleasure of certain curious persons whether it shall be undertaken or no. The human spirit is one and indivisible, and the desire to know what nature is and means is as inseparable from it as the consciousness of God and the longing for reconciliation with Him. The scientific impulse on the one side, and the

faith that worketh by love on the other, exhibit the same spirit in different relations. It is only some mistake that we make as to the origin or office of either that brings them into apparent competition. The scientific impulse goes on its own way and yields its own result. It traces the determination of event by event in a series to which it finds neither beginning nor end; so that to those who have fancied that, if the course of events could be followed by memory far enough back or by a prophetic vision far enough forward, it would lead us to a divine act of creation or completion, science seems to make God disappear. An antecedent in time which has itself had no antecedent, a consequent in time which should have no further consequent, are found to be impossibilities; and though it is a mistake to identify the causation of any phenomenon with its antecedent in time, yet it is vain to seek for it elsewhere than in conditions, of which each is itself conditioned and, as related to sense, sensibly verifiable. A proposition which asserts divine causation for any phenomenon is not exactly false, but turns out on strict

analysis to be unmeaning. Science is thus within its right so long as it merely rejects all imagination of an intrusion of the supernatural within the natural, or of a limit where the one ends and the other begins. It is another matter when it goes on to assume that there is nothing not natural. In such an assumption it is, so to speak, belying itself, for no one has yet succeeded in showing how for a being which was only a part of nature a science of nature should be possible, or how the thinking subject, apart from which nature itself would not be, should be itself natural. Science is therefore misunderstanding its own origin and office when, not content with showing the 'supernatural' to be a mere phrase to which no reality corresponds, it seeks to apply the same process to the spiritual. Its own existence is a witness to the reality of the spiritual, though this, just because it is the source of knowledge, cannot be one of its objects. The true lesson which it teaches is that God is not to be sought in nature, nor in any beginning or end of nature, but in man himself It warns us against trying to make

statements about God as we might about any matter of fact which, in the strict sense, we know, but it does not touch that relation of the inner man to a higher form of itself of which the expression is to be found, not in the propositions of theology, but in prayer and praise—the prayer which asks for nothing, the praise which thanks for nothing, but God's fulfilment of Himself—and in that effort after an ideal perfection which is the spring of the moral life.

But while science, rightly understood, leaves to the spiritual life all the room which this on its part, when rightly understood, requires, it is seldom that the pursuit of science leaves leisure for a true philosophy of what science is and implies. The man of science is apt to deny the existence of, or at least our concern with, anything which is not strictly an object of science or matter of fact. As the moral life cannot be altogether ignored, he misinterprets it into a natural history, and in so doing, though he cannot make it what he understands it to be, he runs the risk of lowering its ideal. Meanwhile the theologian

co-operates with him in error by insisting on that misconception of the basis of faith which brings it and science into competition on the same ground. He will have it that Faith stands or falls with the admission or rejection of certain propositions concerning matters of fact, concerning the causation of events, which are strictly within the domain of science and which *it* must inevitably reject. The man of science is ready enough of himself to assume that the spiritual is no more than the supernatural, which he has always found to be a refuge for ignorance. When he hears the theologian telling the same tale, and talking glibly of some 'projection of the supernatural within the natural' as the origination of Faith, his prejudice is confirmed, and he naturally supposes that Faith is merely one of the modes of ignorance, which he has to clear out of his way. Hence arises that conflict between religion and science which nowadays is on the tongues of all and in the hearts of many—a conflict for which the champions on both sides are fond of telling us that there is no real ground, while they are alike main-

taining positions which, so long as they are held, render it simply unavoidable. It is by no means therefore a piece of mere intellectual wantonness to disturb the faithful in that theory of their faith which they have come to think inseparable from faith itself: to inquire whether Faith, as a spiritual state, is necessarily dependent on assent to those propositions concerning ostensible matters of fact, which form the basis of theological dogma. Such inquiry is necessary for the vindication of Faith itself, and even for its presentation in its properly scriptural character. It is as presumed to be so dependent on miracle that it has come to be opposed to reason in a manner foreign, as we have seen, to the Faith of the New Testament, while conversely that opposition to sense, which is its characteristic in the New Testament, tends to disappear. If Faith were really belief in the occurrence of certain miraculous events upon transmitted evidence of the senses of other people, its certainty would after all be merely a weaker form of the certainty of sense. Such a Faith is neither intrinsically worth maintaining, nor in

the long run can it maintain itself, against the demands of reason. Reason will not be kept at bay by being told that certain truths are above it, when these 'truths,' if they are anything at all, are propositions concerning matters of fact to which from their nature the principles regulating all knowledge must be fully applicable. Under different relations, or in different modes of itself, reason is the source alike of Faith and of knowledge. It is but put at strife with itself when in its character of faith it is supposed to claim an assent which, as the source of the effort after knowledge, it must seek to set aside.

A full justification of the statement that Reason is the source alike of Faith and of knowledge would carry me too far from my present purpose, which is to enforce the practical nature of Faith. What it is intended to convey is something of this sort. Reason is self-consciousness. It is only as taken into our self-consciousness, and so presented to us as an object, that anything is known to us. Thus everything that we know is known to us as a constituent of one world, by the other

constituents of which it is necessarily determined. Hence arises the conception of what we call the uniformity of nature—a conception which, though it may be only formulated and articulated at a comparatively late stage of scientific reflection, is really involved in all knowledge whatever. In conceiving of a nature or 'objective world' at all, we necessarily conceive it as uniform. If we assert a suspension of its laws, a break in its continuity, to have taken place even in a single case; if we maintain so much as the possibility of an intrusion or 'projection' of extra-natural agency within the natural; though we may be willing to stake our life upon the proposition or more truly upon some moral or spiritual interest which we wrongly suppose it to involve, we are none the less saying what is intrinsically unmeaning; for we are affirming the existence of knowledge and nature, and at the same time denying the principle in virtue of which alone knowledge is possible and there is for our consciousness such a thing as nature. But though Reason is thus, in the sense explained, the source of

our knowledge of nature, it can never give completeness to that knowledge or in consequence find in nature an object adequate to itself. Nature remains to us an endless series in which the knowing of anything implies of itself something further to be known. Yet the assurance of there being a reality, one, complete, and absolute, has been the source of that very knowledge which cannot become a knowledge of such reality. Through it alone a nature—the cosmos of our experience, as Mr. Lewes well calls it—has arisen for us. It is involved in the presence of Reason in us, as our self-consciousness, as the consciousness of a subject which is at once the negation and the unity of all things; which we do not know but are, and through which we know. As in us, this rational self-consciousness supervenes upon sense, and it is because the data of sense are the materials which it makes into a knowledge, that a margin always remains to be known beyond what it can know and that thus it cannot know the absolute. But, though communicated to us in a mode which does not allow of its being itself in a strict sense

known, it keeps before us an object which we may seek to become. It is an element of identity between us and a perfect Being, who is in full realisation what we only are in principle and possibility. *That* God is, it entitles us to say with the same certainty as that the world is or that we ourselves are. *What* He is, it does not indeed enable us to say in the same way in which we make propositions about matters of fact, but it moves us to seek to become as He is: to become like Him, to become consciously one with Him, to have the fruition of His Godhead. In this sense it is that Reason issues in the life of Faith.

An objector here may naturally ask, how, if we do not know what God is, we can seek to become as He is. Does not the limitation we admit to the possibility of knowledge make faith too, in the sense described, an impossibility, or at any rate reduce it to a vague aspiration—

> 'The desire of the moth for the star,
> Of the night for the morrow,
> The devotion to something afar
> From the sphere of our sorrow'?

Now, in the first place, it may be noticed that some limitation to our knowledge of the object of Faith is implied in the very idea of Faith. If we knew God as we know anything else, if His nature had been revealed to us by miraculous evidence of a kind with that which convinces us of matters of fact, then would faith be no more faith. As St. Paul says of Hope, which is but another name for Faith, 'We are saved by hope, but hope that is seen is not hope.' In a certain respect there is a correspondence between Faith, as the practical consciousness of God, and the artist's consciousness of an ideal. The ideal which governs the production of a work of art—whether it be the ideal of an imitation of nature, or of something so far removed from this as I should suppose a musical composition to be—is not in the proper sense an object of knowledge to the artist. It is not anything which he could adequately describe in words. He can but gradually, and never completely, define the ideal by means of the work in which it is to some extent realised. It thus appears that an object of conscious-

ness may be in the highest degree operative —not upon us, but in and through us—and in that most proper sense real, which yet is not known, but can only come to be known indirectly or piece-meal through the gradual results of its operation. It will be observed further, that such an ideal object does not exist apart from the consciousness of it. It is not what we suppose an external thing to be—there ready-made before and independently of our being aware of it. It exists only in the consciousness: yet any consciousness of it that the artist could call his own or that he could express—not in a description before-hand, but in his most finished work—falls far short, as he would tell us, of the ideal itself. The ideal exists in his consciousness, yet not in its full reality, for if it did it would no longer be an ideal. There is an identity between it and his consciousness of it; otherwise it would not exist for him at all. Yet it must be more and other than his consciousness of it, or that consciousness would not be of an ideal.

By help of this analogy it may be under-

stood how there may be a consciousness of God, which is not a knowledge of Him of a kind with our knowledge of matters of fact, and yet is the most real, because the most operative, of all spiritual principles: a consciousness not definable like an ordinary conception, but which defines itself in a moral life expressive of it; which is not indeed an external proof of the existence of God, but is in principle that existence itself—a first communication of the Godhead. Such consciousness has in manifold forms been the moralising agent in human society, nay the formative principle of that society itself. The existence of specific duties and the recognition of them, the spirit of self-sacrifice, the moral law and the reverence for it in its most abstract and absolute form—all no doubt presuppose society; but society, of a kind to render them possible, is not the creature of appetite and fear, or of the most complicated and indirect results of these. It implies the action in man of a principle in virtue of which he projects himself into the future or into some other world as some more perfect

being than he actually is, and thus seeks not merely to satisfy momentary wants but to become 'another man'—to become more nearly as this more perfect being. Under this influence wants and desires that have their root in the animal nature become an impulse of improvement ('Besserungstrieb'), which forms, enlarges, and re-casts societies; always keeping before man in various guise, according to the degree of his development, an unrealised ideal of a Best which is his God, and giving Divine authority to the customs or laws by which some likeness of this ideal is wrought into the actuality of life. I cannot here attempt to trace even in outline, as a Philosophy of History should do, the process by which God's revelation of Himself in the human consciousness has thus issued in the institutions by which our elementary moralisation is brought about; or to show how upon this process there has supervened another in which the consciousness of God has come to distinguish itself from these its partial and changing results, and to recognise itself alone, in opposition to any outward law

of state or church, as the manifested God, His communication of Himself in spirit and in truth. We are born, so to speak, into a world in which these processes have already been carried so far, in which the consciousness of God has already so far embodied itself, that the problem of faith for us is rather to overcome the selfishness and conceit which prevent us from taking into ourselves individually the revelation of God which is everywhere about us, than to develope that revelation more fully. It is our very familiarity with God's expression of Himself in the institutions of society, in the moral law, in the language and inner life of Christians, in our own consciences, that helps to blind us to its divinity, and emboldens us to claim the right to please ourselves unabashed by its presence. Yet if thus, by refusing to recognise it, we turn the light that is in us to darkness, how great is that darkness! In the higher forms of the Christian religion the spirit of man has reached that stage—sometimes called by mystics the reign of the Holy Ghost—in which the consciousness of God is

a consciousness of Him, no longer as an outward power, but as one with itself,—as reconciled and indwelling. If it becomes so perverted in us that, having ceased to look for a God outside us, we will not recognise Him in ourselves and in that which our conscience reveals to us, we are committing the true sin against the Holy Ghost—a sin unpardonable, in the sense that it shuts us out from the higher life—the life of correlative self-reverence and self-abasement, of self-sacrifice and self-development—the life of faith.

The enemy which religion, i.e. a God-seeking morality, has now to fear, is not a passionate atheism. Such atheism is often a religion which misunderstands itself. It is seeking after God, but in the hurry of irritation against the ignorance and fear which call themselves religious, it cannot recognise its object under the old name. It may limit and distort the spiritual life, and yet leave the spring of its nobility untouched. Not from it is our danger, but from the slow sap of an undermining indifference which does not deny

God and Duty, but ignores them; which does not care to trouble itself about them, and finds in our acknowledged inability to know them, as we know matters of fact, a new excuse for putting them aside. It is this which takes off the native beauty from the fair forehead of a child-like faith, and leaves, not the scars of a much-questioning and often-failing but still believing search after God, whom so to seek is to find, but the vacancy of contented worldliness or the sneer of the baffled pleasure-seeker.

It is indeed no new malady. While 'the flesh lusteth against the spirit' it must always be at work, and may be as prevalent in an age of orthodoxy as in an age of doubt. But we know it best and have most to fear it in the form which it takes from the temper of our own time. Most of us, I should suppose, who have felt the influence of modern 'culture' at all, must have felt that it has been giving at any rate great opportunities to this enemy of our spiritual life. Everything has had a history, we have learnt complacently to say. The notions of God, of duty, of an ideal life

have been constantly shifting. They have 'developed,' and that is vaguely taken to mean that they are transitory phases of a force moving we know not whence or whither. 'We are children of nature, the offspring of circumstance; nature and circumstance may be left to make us what they will, so long as we take our fill undisturbed of such pleasures as they put in our way. A perfect Being whom we cannot know, an absolute law which we cannot describe, are clearly no concern of ours.' So, more or less articulately, we are apt to argue; and though the Divine consciousness in us, which is necessary even to the possibility of our so arguing, cannot thus be wholly suppressed, it is prevented from duly actualising itself, and we are left in a state of moral triviality than which the darkest despair of doubt is far more noble. Even though we bear up against the deadening influence, yet as criticism compels us to discard, one after another, 'the fair humanities of old religion'—the anthropomorphic formulæ in which we have been used to express to ourselves the presence and action of God as an

external person moulding nature to His purposes and intervening in it when and how He will—our spiritual life cannot but feel the change. It lacks the means of utterance and communication. We know not how to speak of Divine things to each other; we are estranged from the sympathies of the Christian congregation. Yet 'still the heart doth need a language;' and, unable to use the old or to make a new one, it loses the energy which free exercise and expression are needed to sustain. Our moral standard indeed may not suffer. We may persist grimly in the walk of duty and refuse to acquiesce in the attitude of disbelief, but 'the fire so bright, the love so sweet, the unction spiritual' are ours no longer.

It may seem more easy to show the inevitableness of this state of mind than a way of deliverance from it. No deliverance indeed is to be looked for from without. No discovery in nature, no 'glimpses of the unseen,' no revived force or recognition of authority, will bring us help. Faith is not to be saved by anything that would supersede faith, but

only by its own faithfulness; and it will be so saved if, through the trial to which in the criticism of its supposed dogmatic basis it is subjected, it learns more clearly to recognise its native divinity—the God that worketh in it—and its proper independence of external support. Thus finding in itself the revelation which it seeks in vain elsewhere, it does not cease to be—rather it becomes again—what in essence it was to St. Paul. It is in his spirit, I venture to think, that we may reason thus with our doubts. 'You complain that by searching you cannot find out God. No eye can see, or ear hear Him. The assertion that He exists cannot be verified like any other matter of fact. But what if that be not because He is so far off, but because He is so near. You cannot know Him as you know a particular fact related to you, but neither can you so know yourself; and it is yourself—not as you are but as in seeking Him you become—that is His revelation. "Say not in thine own heart, who shall ascend into heaven or descend into the deep," to find God in the height of another world or in the depths of

nature? "The word of God is very nigh thee, even in thy mouth and in thy heart." It is the Word that has been made man; that has been uttering itself in all the high endeavour, the long-suffering love, the devoted search for truth, which have so far moralised mankind, and that now speaks in your conscience. It is the God in you which strives for communication with God.

> "Speak to Him thou, for He hears, and spirit
> with spirit can meet;
> Closer is He than breathing, and nearer
> than hands and feet."

Not as to the sensual ear, nor necessarily through the stinted expression of verbal signs, but as a man communes with his own heart, you may speak to God. Though you know not what you should pray for as you ought, yet the Spirit itself maketh intercession for you with groanings which cannot be uttered. Look not for an external answer to your prayer. Your prayer will be its own answer, even as the virtuous action is its own reward. Prayer indeed, if of the right sort, is already incipient action; or, more properly,

it is a moral action which has not yet made its outward sign. It is the determination of desire by the consciousness of God, and is an incident of that process which, as the effort to realise a conception of absolute law, to fulfil our true vocation, to develope humanity, to enact God in the world, constitutes the morally good life. Neither the prayer nor the life is a means to anything beyond itself. Each has its value simply as the expression or realisation of the Divine principle which renders each possible. To ask for a verification of your idea of God before you pray, or for a proof of the existence of an absolute moral law before you deny yourself in obedience to its command, is to deprive yourself of the benefit of the only proof or verification which the nature of the case admits. You cannot find a verification of the idea of God or duty; you can only make it. God is not something outside and beyond the consciousness of Him, any more than duty is outside and beyond the consciousness of it. The true verification of the consciousness is the life of prayer and self-denial which expresses it.

Though the failing heart cries out for evidence, at the worst live on as if there were God and duty, and they will prove themselves to you in your life. The witness which God has given of Himself in the spiritual history of mankind you will in this way make your own.'

Whether such language will carry much meaning to those to whom I speak I cannot but feel doubtful. But I can only say to them what I say to myself, and offer them the thoughts in which, amid much misgiving and frequent failure of heart and will, I still find assurance. Even if the truth of such thoughts be accepted, the difficulty of making them available for the daily food which human weakness requires still remains. They may suffice for us while reason is strong and the temper calm, but when

> 'Our light is low
> When the blood creeps, and the nerves prick
> And tingle, and the heart is sick,
> And all the wheels of Being slow,'

we need another sustenance—the support, as we should be apt to say, of something more 'objective' and tangible. It is idle

to ignore the reality and inevitableness of this demand, nor, though we may anticipate a time when it will be rather met by the sympathies of a society breathing the Christian spirit than by the propositions of an anthropomorphic theology, will this anticipation give us much practical help, since the needed sympathies are at present scarcely to be found except among those to whom they seem dependent upon such a theology. To those therefore who find themselves, not indeed even seemingly detached from the eternal basis of faith, but to a certain degree weakened and distressed in their spiritual walk by inability to adopt the received dogmatic expression of the Christian faith and by consequent estrangement from Christian society, I must frankly confess that there is no present compensatory support which I can indicate. I can but make a few suggestion for lessening the danger and loss which cannot be wholly avoided.

In the first place, let us not make the estrangement wider than it need be. Inability to adopt the creeds of Christendom in their

natural sense—and in any other sense they are best left alone—need not disqualify us from using its prayers. A creed is meant to serve either as an article of agreement with other men, or as a basis of theological argument; and from each point of view there are objections to using its words in any other meaning than that which they are ordinarily understood to bear. But in prayer we need not ask whether our words are such as would be understood by others in the same sense as by us, or whether they convey a correct theological conception. They are not meant to be heard of men. 'He that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the spirit.' So long as our prayers express the effort after a higher life, recognised as proceeding from, and only to be satisfied by, the grace of God, the theological formulæ in which they are clothed are of little importance. In the prayers of the Christian Church, issuing as they do from a consciousness to which the death in Christ to sin and the new life in Him unto God, a free forgiveness and the indwelling of the Spirit, represented spiritual experiences, we

have modes of utterance which in the development of the same consciousness—and it cannot be developed without utterance—we may properly make our own. The fact that others who use them have beliefs as to historical occurrences which we do not share, need not prevent us from sharing with them what is not the expression of an historical belief but of a spiritual aspiration. Such participation is of the more value when it becomes part of a general co-operation in that active life of the Christian society, in which the prayers of the congregation find their proper complement. It is often for want of this co-operation that Faith, as a spiritual principle, tends to languish in those to whom the traditional dogmatic expression of it has become impossible. Such persons are much too ready to acquiesce in isolation as a necessary result of their opinions. It is rather the result of an obtrusion of their opinions, with which vanity and impatience have much to do. The days of tests and declarations, except for clerical functions, are over, and it is surely a weakness, when we are not pressed

for our opinions, to make so much of them to other people, or to ourselves, as to be excluded or to exclude ourselves from joining in a common activity, the spirit of which we inwardly reverence and would gladly make our own, while in separation we are almost certain to lose it. It is one of the misfortunes of our life here that it tends to make us overrate the importance of opinions as compared, I do not say with mere outward conduct, but with the practical principles of the inner life; and even though, as a matter of theory, we avoid this mistake, yet our position and employment allow us few openings into that active life of charity in which Christian faith is most readily realised. Even here, however, in our intercourse with each other, there are opportunities for us to 'bear one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ;' nor, because much of our intellectual activity is the result of mere curiosity or emulation, should we forget that there is such a thing as a pursuit of truth, in principle identical with the striving after God which animates the moral life. Those of us to whom University life is merely

an avenue to the great world, would do well betimes to seek opportunities of co-operation with those simple Christians whose creed, though we may not be able exactly to adopt it, is to them the natural expression of a spirit which at the bottom of our heart we recognise as higher than our own. In the every-day life of Christian citizenship, in its struggle against ignorance and vice, such opportunities are readily forthcoming. It will be rather, it is true, on the fringe of the Church that such work will lie. For some of the deeper charities, so to speak, of the Christian society—such as ministering to the spiritual wants of the sick—speculative differences may for the present necessarily disqualify us. But there remains a large range of Christian activity, from which our excommunication will be our own fault. In it, if we will exercise the needful restraint—if we will curb our conceit, and watch our tongues, and keep aloof from temptations to controversy—we may still have some experience of that fellowship with the saints which is necessary for our daily sustenance in the life of Faith.

Meanwhile, if the present distress must still for a time continue, if the cheerfulness and brightness of faith should still seem necessarily to disappear along with the abandonment of that dogmatic expression of it which criticism invalidates, let us be all the firmer in refusing any compromise with our lower nature. It is not the reality of God or of the ideal law of conduct that is in question, but the adequacy of our modes of expressing them. We may be passing through a period of transition from one mode of expressing them to another, or perhaps to an admission of their final ineffableness. Whatever we do, let us not make the difficulties of the transition an excuse for concessions to the spirit of self-indulgence. If doubts come thick, and we have ceased to look for any rending of the heavens to remove them, so that our faith in God no longer brings the old joy and peace of believing, let us rather ask ourselves what right we have to be happy than seek our happiness in pleasures where, because we are capable of God, we cannot find it. Faith in God and duty will survive much doubt and

difficulty and distress, and perhaps attain to some nobler mode of itself under their influence. But if once we have come to acquiesce in such a standard of living as must make us wish God and duty to be illusions, it must surely die.

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